

~~TOP SECRET~~

BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

YUGOSLAVIA: Succession Outlook

*The open manner in which the regime has prepared for the succession indicates a large degree of confidence in the government and party about the ability to govern without President Tito--at least in the near term.* ~~TOP SECRET~~

The leadership appears intent on conveying the outward appearance of a smooth transfer of power. Stevan Doronjski and Lazar Kolisevski, who filled in for Tito when he first became seriously ill in January, will now formally take over most of the late President's responsibilities and duties in the party and state leadership respectively. A behind-the-scenes power struggle, however, is likely to take place between a small group of men in whom Tito has long put a great deal of trust. This group includes Defense Minister Ljubicic, Interior Minister Herljevic, and Presidium members Vladimir Bakaric, Milos Minic, and Stane Dolanc. ~~TOP SECRET~~

Bakaric, who Tito placed "in charge" before his death, is the "first among equals" in this group. In the months just prior to Tito's death, however, efforts to have Bakaric named to one of the most important party posts, met with opposition. Indeed, a heated contest to fill this position appears to be taking shape around Bakaric on the one hand and Milos Minic on the other. Tito probably intended Bakaric to act as a stabilizing influence and to provide continuity as Yugoslavia moves to a collegial system of rule. Bakaric's efforts to play this role, however, appear to be creating strains within the leadership. ~~TOP SECRET~~

Despite the opposition, Bakaric continued to grow in stature and prominence during the last weeks of Tito's life. As the last of Tito's World War II partisan colleagues, he has the right credentials to assume leadership. He also seems well suited to keep the country's diverse

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nationalities and factions in line and arbitrate disagreements that are bound to arise within the leadership. He reportedly suffers from heart problems, and he may not be able to play an extended role in overseeing the transition. [REDACTED]

The Yugoslav media effectively prepared the public for Tito's passing by reporting candidly on his deteriorating condition. It also has helped to set the stage for the transition by emphasizing the correctness of Tito's road to socialism and by lauding Yugoslav accomplishments in foreign and domestic affairs. Within an hour of Tito's death, the official Yugoslav news agency issued a stern warning that Yugoslavia will fight to preserve its brand of socialism with all means available. [REDACTED]

In at least one respect, Tito's death has come at an opportune time. The Yugoslav party, government, and people are unified in opposing the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, a move all view as a threat to Yugoslavia. So long as the Yugoslavs believe that they are threatened by the USSR, the population should continue to stand behind Tito's successors. Although it remains to be seen how well the successors themselves will work together over a long period of time, they are likely to display an overriding sense of common purpose for the short term.

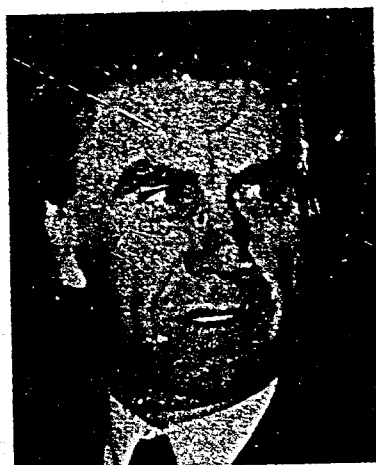
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5 May 1980



Vladimir Bakaric



Lazar Kolarovski



Stevan Doronjski